INITIAL STUDY / ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND SECTION 4(F) EVALUATION

BEFORE

AFTER

07-LA-405 K.P.41.0/47.6 (P.M. 25.5/29.6)

Federal Highway Administration

California Department of Transportation

June 2000

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

SCH No. 1999111073
07-LA-405-41.0/47.6 (PM 25.5/29.6)
07223-1178A0 and 1178C0

NEGATIVE DECLARATION (CEQA)

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

Description

The proposed project would widen Interstate 405 (San Diego Freeway) from ten to twelve lanes in order to provide one high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane in each direction. The project would extend from State Route 90 (Marina Freeway) to Interstate 10 (Santa Monica Freeway), in the Cities of Los Angeles and Culver City, in Los Angeles County, a distance of 6.6 kilometers (4.1 miles). In addition, the northbound Sawtelle off-ramp will be closed and the Culver Boulevard on-ramp will be become an off-ramp. A frontage road will be added adjacent to the southbound side, connecting Sawtelle Boulevard to Braddock Drive west of I-405. The project is being proposed to relieve traffic congestion by encouraging commuters to rideshare, and is one of several such projects being considered for I-405 to provide for a continuous HOV facility.

Construction of the proposed project is expected to require approximately three years. Construction activities would be planned and conducted in such a manner as to reduce traffic delay as much as possible. The construction process would be managed by a traffic control plan. Soundwalls and retaining walls would also be constructed as part of the proposed project.

Determination

An Initial Study has been prepared by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). On the basis of this study it is determined that the proposed action will not have a significant effect upon the environment for the following reasons:

1. The project would not substantially affect topography, seismic exposure, erosion, floodplains, wetlands or water quality.

2. The proposed project will not significantly affect natural vegetation, sensitive, endangered or threatened plant or animal species, or agriculture.

3. The proposed project will not significantly affect solid wastes, or the consumption of energy and natural resources.

4. The proposed project will promote improved regional air quality.

5. The proposed project will result in increased noise levels along its route, but with the addition of soundwalls, these effects will be reduced to acceptable levels.

6. The proposed project will not significantly affect land use, public facilities or other socioeconomic features.

7. The proposed project will not significantly affect cultural resources, scenic resources, aesthetics, open space or parklands. Landscaping will be provided to mitigate the loss of existing freeway vegetation.

Original Signed by Ronald Kosinski for Raja Mitwasi *June 19, 2000*

Raja Mitwasi, Deputy Director
California Department of Transportation
District 7

Date

Table of Contents

Table of Contents (continued)

List of Figures

List of Tables

Appendices

Note: A vertical line in the margin indicates that changes were made in the text from the Draft Environmental Document (Initial Study / Environmental Assessment) to the Final Environmental Document (Negative Declaration / Finding of No Significant Impact).

5. Discussion of Environmental Evaluation

5.1 Physical

Seismicity

Question 4. Will the proposal result in unstable earth surfaces or increase the seismic or geological hazards?

Geologic processes, which have caused earthquakes in the past, can be expected to continue. Seismic events likely to project the greatest bedrock accelerations, could be a moderate event on the Newport-Inglewood fault zone and/or a large event on a distant active fault.

Caltrans builds to current earthquake standards and will use best engineering practices to minimize damage from ground shaking. These standards have been established to reduce the damage from seismic activity which will reduce the potential for impacts to the public.

Impacts of a geotechnical nature are negligible and no mitigation measures other than standard engineering design and practices are recommended.

Hazardous Waste

Question 9. Will the proposal violate any published Federal, state, or local standards pertaining to hazardous waste, solid waste or litter control?

The Initial Site Assessment (ISA) indicates that aerially deposited lead, the removal of existing asphalt concrete ramps, shoulders, and frontage roads, and the acquisition of right-of-way will contribute to the potential for hazardous waste mitigation. Modified Alternative 3ab will impact some existing structures, so an asbestos survey will be completed during the design phase to mitigate the demolition of the buildings.) Based on the project description, it appears that this project will fall under a new variance allowing for the reuse of lead contaminated soils within defined limits of contamination. This new variance is anticipated to be issued by The Department of Toxic Substances Control in August 2000. Currently there is no variance, however, once the new variance has taken effect, the project may need to be reviewed for hazardous waste issues.

Standard procedures for the disposal of asphalt and concrete will be utilized. The right-of-way acquisitions are mostly residential, and Caltrans policy states that the State does not acquire contaminated properties. The findings and recommendations of the ISA Report dated October 1995 will be included in the Aerially Deposited Lead section of the Special Provisions.

Floodplain

Question 11. Will the proposal encroach upon a floodplain or result in or be affected by floodwaters or tidal waves?

Federal-Aid Policy Guide 23 CFR 650A requires that a Location Hydraulic Study be prepared for projects that encroach on a 100-year base floodplain. Based on the Location Hydraulic Study, it is determined that this is a Low Risk Project.

Water Quality

Question 12. Will the proposal adversely affect the quantity or quality of surface water, groundwater, or public water supply?

Question 15. Will the proposal violate or be inconsistent with Federal, State or local water quality standards?

For both short term and long term water quality impacts, temporary as well as permanent Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be identified during the final design when there is sufficient engineering details available to warrant competent analysis. Caltrans is committed to implement cost effective temporary and permanent BMPs as identified during final design.

Air Pollutants

Question 17. Will the proposal result in an increase in air pollutant emissions, adverse effects on or deterioration of ambient air quality?

A quantitative assessment of the project's impact on air quality was completed for both microscale and mesoscale analyses. The microscale analysis examines the area adjacent to the freeway and the mesoscale determines the corridor or regional effect of the proposed project. The results of these analyses are shown in Table 9.

Construction of the Build Alternatives (3a and 3b) will lead to a decrease in air pollutant concentrations in the future due to an improved LOS along this segment of the I-405.

The air quality analyses showed that neither of the build alternatives will have an adverse effect on the environment, and no sensitive receptors will be exposed to substantial pollutant concentrations. Also, neither build alternative will increase ambient CO levels in a manner that will produce air quality violations, nor worsen or delay timely attainment of the CO air quality standards. Current and projected measurements indicate that the one-hour and the eight-hour standards will not be exceeded. This project will not cause or contribute to any new localized CO violations or increase its frequency or severity.

Question 19. Will the proposal violate or be inconsistent with Federal, State, or local air standards or control plans?

This project is included in the adopted 1998 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and is part of the current adopted 1998/2005 Regional Transportation Improvement Plan (RTIP) and the Federal Improvement Program (FTIP). The 1998 RTP has been approved for air quality transportation conformity by the FHWA. Also, it is consistent with the Regional Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP). This project conforms to the Federal Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. Therefore, this project demonstrates Caltrans' commitment to implement the RTP/AQMP control measures in accordance with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations.

The Federal Highway Administration currently requires qualitative PM_{10} analysis for all non-exempt projects in PM_{10} nonattainment areas that must have localized impact analysis. This project is located in a PM_{10} nonattainment area, and therefore, a qualitative analysis is required. No violations of the PM_{10} NAAQS or CAAQS have been recorded at the

monitoring site near the project, and the monitored concentrations are well below the standards (Table 11; Table 12). Particulate matter concentration monitored by South Coast Air Quality Management District for the West Los Angeles – VA Hospital PM_{10} monitor (the monitor closest to the project site) showed no monitored violations occurred at or near the project location, and documented PM_{10} concentrations well below the standards. Recent work by University of California at Davis and others suggests that project-level PM_{10} impacts are insignificant beginning a short distance downwind of the project. These studies document that unless background conditions already contribute to pollutant concentrations that exceed or are close to the Ambient Air Quality Standards threshold, project impacts will be negligible. This type of project is an insignificant contributor to localized PM_{10} emissions from regional VMT. This project is included in the approved RTIP and Transportation Improvement Plan. This project does not cause or contribute to new localized CO or PM_{10} violations or increase the severity or frequency of existing violations in the area mainly affected by this project.

Noise Levels

Question 20. Will the proposal result in an increase in noise levels or vibration for adjoining areas?

Question 21. Will the proposal result in any Federal, State, or local noise criteria being equal or exceeded?

An increase in noise levels is expected to increase slightly in the future due to increases in local traffic. The increases will result in a negligible increase (if any) in the noise levels experienced by residents adjacent to this project location. However, the existing walls, which are to remain as part of the project, will reduce the anticipated noise to a level less than that outlined in the Federal Noise Criteria.

Noise impacts of the project were determined and mitigation was recommended where reasonable and feasible. Appendix F gives both summary tables of noise measurements and location descriptions, and figures of the location of the proposed soundwall locations. The criterion for barrier height is in accordance with the Caltrans Design Manual Chapter 1100 (February 1995). The wall heights indicated in the seven tables in Appendix F represent the nominal vertical dimension above the edge of traveled way elevation.

The Noise Study Report indicates that sensitive receptors are located within the project area. To mitigate the impacts of these sensitive receptors, soundwalls are proposed throughout the project area to decrease the noise impacts to a level that is compliant with the Federal Noise Criteria. The final decision, however, regarding soundwall location and design is subject to public input from the affected residents and the cost effectiveness calculation by the Project Engineer during final design. The tables and figures in Appendices B, C, D, and F indicate the location of the proposed soundwalls.

Table 11 – Year 2020 Carbon Monoxide Concentration Projections (Parts-per-Million)

One-Hour Concentration					
Receptor	Ambient[1]	No Build		Build	
		Roadway Contribution[2]	Total	Roadway Contribution[2]	Total
School	7.0	1.3	8.3	1.1	8.1
Res. 1	7.0	1.2	8.2	1.1	8.1
Res. 2	7.0	3.8	10.8	1.5	8.5
Eight-Hour Concentration					
Receptor	Ambient[3]	No Build		Build	
		Roadway Contribution[4]	Total	Roadway Contribution[4]	Total
School	4.1	0.9	5.0	0.8	4.9
Res. 1	4.1	0.8	4.9	0.8	4.9
Res. 2	4.1	2.7	6.8	1.1	5.2

1. *1997 's Annual High at the West Los Angeles – Veteran's Administration Hospital Air Quality Monitoring Station.*
2. *Receptors are located at the right-of-way line of the freeway.*
3. *1997's Second Annual High from West Los Angeles – Veteran's Administration Hospital Air Quality Monitoring Station.*
4. *The persistence factor is 0.7. The one-hour roadway contribution multiplied by the persistence factor equals the eight-hour roadway contribution.*

Table 12 – Local Air Quality[1]

Pollutant	Year	Maximum Concentration[2]	California		Federal	
			Standard	Days Standard Exceeded	Primary Standard	Days Standard Exceeded
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	1995	8*	20 ppm for 1 hour	0*	35 ppm for 1 hour	0*
	1996	7		0		0
	1997	7		0		0
	1998	7		0		0
	1995	5.6*	9.0 ppm for 8 hours	0*	9 ppm for 8 hours	0*
	1996	4.5		0		0
	1997	4.4		0		0
	1998	4.5		0		0
Ozone (O_3)	1995	0.14	0.09 ppm for 1 hour	19*	0.12 ppm for 1 hour	1*
	1996	0.14		13		1
	1997	0.11		6		2
	1998	0.13		7		1
Nitrogen Oxide (NO_2)	1995	0.20*/0.0278*	0.25 ppm for 1 hour	0*	0.053 ppm annual average	0*
	1996	0.18/0.0289		0		0
	1997	0.14/0.0285		0		0
	1998	0.13/0.0270		0		0
Fine Particulate Matter (PM_{10})	1995	--	50 $\mu g/m^3$ for 24 hours	--	150 $\mu g/m^3$ for 24 hours	--
	1996	--		--		--
	1997	--		--		--
	1998	--		--		--

1. *Measured at the West Los Angeles VA Hospital Ambient Air Monitoring Station.*
2. *Maximum concentration is measured over the same period as the California Standard.*

* *Less than 12 full months of data. May not be representative.*

-- = *Pollutant not monitored*

$\mu g/m^3$ = *microgram per cubic meter*

ppm = *parts per million*

Biological Resources

Question 23. Will the proposal change the diversity of species or number of any species (including trees, shrubs, grass, microflora, and aquatic plants)?

Information on sensitive species was obtained from the California Department of Fish and Game's Natural Diversity Data Base to determine the presence of any sensitive species in relation to the project area. It was determined that this project will not adversely impact the diversity or number of species in the project area. There are, however, numerous ornamental trees that will need to be removed during construction on the frontage road. Impacts to the trees should be kept to the minimum necessary and should be scheduled to occur between September 1 and March 15 to avoid impacts to nesting birds. If trees must be removed outside of this period, a survey for nesting birds will need to be conducted one to two weeks prior to construction; if nesting birds are present, coordination with the California Department of Fish and Game will be required to determine the appropriate course of action.

The landscaping along the highway will be replanted following completion of the project. This planting will avoid the use of plants on the California Noxious Species List from the United States Department of Agriculture (Appendix G), and will assist in compliance with Executive Order 13112 (Section 3.7). The landscaping that will be planted will act as a buffer to prevent the introduction of invasive species into the area.

5.2 Social and Economic

Question 33. Will the proposal be inconsistent with any elements of adopted community plans, policies or goals, or the California Urban Strategy?

The ramp consolidation concept (Modified Alternative 3ab) is consistent with Culver City's long-term transportation improvement plan for Culver Boulevard per the Culver City General Plan. The ramp consolidation has been planned and preliminarily designed in a joint effort between Caltrans and city staff/consultants.

Neighborhood

Question 35. Will the proposal affect the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population in the area?

Question 36. Will the proposal affect life-styles, or neighborhood character or stability?

The proposed project is located in an urban area, and although it will impact existing residential neighborhoods and adjacent commercial development, the overall impact will not result in a negative impact to the community. Alternative 3a will impact 63 residential and 4 commercial properties, and Alternative 3b will impact 64 residential and 4 commercial properties. These properties are located at the edge of neighborhoods and are adjacent to I-405. The remaining properties along Sawtelle Boulevard will face I-405. However, these homes currently face the freeway. As previously mentioned, soundwalls are also proposed.

Question 37. Will the proposal affect minority, elderly, handicapped, transit-dependent, or other specific interest groups?

No adverse effects would occur as a result of the proposed project on minority groups, the elderly, handicapped, transit-dependent, or other special interest groups.

In addition, Executive Order 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low Income Populations*, signed by President Clinton on February 11, 1994 requires federal agencies to take the appropriate and necessary steps to identify and address "disproportionately high and adverse effects" of projects on the health or environment of minority and low-income populations to the greatest extent practicable and permitted by law. No disproportionately high and adverse impacts to minority or low-income populations have been identified.

Question 39. Will the proposal affect existing housing, require the acquisition of residential improvements or the displacement of people or create a demand for additional housing?

A total of sixty-five (65) parcels will be impacted by Alternative 3a, sixty-four (64) parcels by Alternative 3b, and fifty-two (52) by Modified Alternative 3ab (Appendix I). These acquisitions may involve either full or partial acquisitions, and final determination will be made by financially feasibility at the final design stage. Impacts to residential properties include 62 for Alternative 3a, 69 for Alternative 3b, and 46 for Modified Alternative 3ab. The Relocation Assistance Program (RAP) will be available for residential properties impacted by this project. Impacted residents will be eligible for relocation benefits (Appendix J).

A high number of other vacant apartment and residential units are present in the adjacent area (Table 8), so housing availability in the project area is not considered to be adversely impacted. Additionally, there is potential for new housing development on infill, vacant, and recycled sites (Culver City General Plan Housing Element, p. II-6).

Employment and Industry

Question 40. Will the proposal affect employment, industry or commerce, or require the displacement of businesses or farms?

The proposed project will require a few businesses (4 for Alternative 3a, 4 for Alternative 3b, and 3 for Modified Alternative 3ab) to be relocated. The Relocation Assistance Program (RAP) will be available for commercial properties impacted by this project. Appendix J contains details about this program. With the use of the RAP program, there will not be an adverse impact to commercial businesses. The proposed project will not affect industrial, agricultural or farmland properties.

Question 41. Will the proposal affect property values or the local tax base?

Because some businesses (4 for Alternative 3a, 4 for Alternative 3b, and 3 for Modified Alternative 3ab) will inevitably have to be relocated, employment and businesses will be impacted. However, adequate vacant spaces exist so that these businesses, with the use of RAP funds, will not be adversely impacted.

Public Services

Question 42. Will the proposal affect any community facilities (including medical, educational, scientific, recreational, or religious institutions, ceremonial sites or sacred shrines)?

The proposed project will temporarily affect the existing bike trail and pedestrian path. Both will be closed temporarily during project construction. See Programmatic 4(f) Evaluation (Chapter 10). An easement currently exists on the church property (located at 3400 Sawtelle Boulevard, Los Angeles), and there is a possibility that this will be taken, however, neither the building nor parking spaces will be impacted.

Question 43. Will the proposal affect public utilities, or police, fire, emergency or other public services?

Due to freeway widening, some utilities will need to be relocated. These include utility poles (telephone and electrical), gas lines, sprinkler systems, water lines, a few storm drains, sewer lines and relocation of some manholes. No high risk utilities will be impacted by this project. Although an oil line is located along Culver Boulevard, it will not be impacted by this project.

Culver City Fire Station 2 is located adjacent to the affected area, specifically, at 11252 Washington Boulevard, one block north of Sawtelle Boulevard. Some temporary impacts may occur during construction, such as reduced accessibility. However, a traffic detour plan will be coordinated with the Culver City Fire Station prior to construction. Additionally, mitigation measures can also ensure adequate access into and out of the area.

Access roads to the two flood control channels (Ballona Creek and Westwood) within the project area will need to be relocated. However, access to the channels will remain open during construction.

Question 44. Will the proposal have a substantial impact on existing transportation systems or alter present patterns of circulation or movement of people and/or goods?

Under Alternative 3b, the circulation system surrounding Culver Boulevard will be altered (See Attachment 2 in Chapter 10). Although there may be a period of transition for drivers to become familiarized with the new system, the overall impact will be a reduction in the confusion of drivers and the elimination of isolated ramps.

Question 45. Will the proposal generate additional traffic?

Under Alternatives 3b and Modified Alternative 3ab, the circulation system surrounding Culver Boulevard will be altered (See Chapter 10). However, the reconfiguration of Culver Boulevard will minimize the additional traffic volume that will occur at Culver Boulevard.

Eliminating both the northbound Sawtelle Boulevard on-ramp and off-ramp will improve traffic flow on Sawtelle Boulevard. Surface street traffic would be diverted to Culver Boulevard, a Major Highway Class II (City of Los Angeles, *Palms - Mar Vista - Del Rey Community Plan*, Generalized Circulation Map). A frontage road connecting Sawtelle Boulevard to Braddock Drive will help the motorists to utilize the Braddock Drive on-ramp (Table 6).

In addition, Culver Boulevard is currently configured with two 2-way streets. Both throughways will be consolidated to provide a better flow of traffic. By consolidating the two roadways, the greenbelt lying between Culver Boulevard North and Culver Boulevard South will be shifted north. (See Attachment 2 in Chapter 10). The reconfiguration of the greenbelt involves realigning the bike trail and pedestrian walkway, further addressed in the

Programmatic 4(f) Evaluation as required by Section 4(f) of U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (See Chapter 10, Programmatic 4(f) Evaluation).

Question 46. Will the proposal affect or be affected by existing parking facilities or result in demand of new parking?

Some parking spaces along Culver Boulevard North will be eliminated under the recommended project alternative (Modified Alternative 3ab) when Culver Boulevard is realigned in this area. In addition, some parking spaces will be impacted by the partial acquisition of Assessor Parcel Number 4251-013-006 (Appendix I).

Archaeological and Historical Sites

Question 51. Will the proposal affect a significant archaeological or historic site, structure object, or building?

A total of 153 properties included in the Area of Potential Effect were evaluated for historic and architectural significance. Seven parcels are vacant and 146 parcels are improved. Of these, 138 contain single and multi-family residences, 7 are commercial properties, and 1 is a church. Seventy-seven of these improved parcels were built prior to 1954 and were formally evaluated according to National Register and California Register criteria. None appear to meet National Register or California criteria for historic and architectural significance.

There are 22 bridge structures within the project APE. None is yet 50 years of age and all have been identified as Category 5 (not eligible) bridges in the "1986 Caltrans Historic Bridge Inventory".

An archaeological survey conducted for the project determined that no archaeological sites are known to exist within, or adjacent to, the project area.

This project will not impact sensitive cultural resources. However, in the event that archeological or historical materials are encountered during construction, all construction activities placing such resources at risk must cease until proper examination by a qualified archaeologist or cultural historian.

Impacts Associated with Construction

Question 54. Will the proposal result in substantial impacts associated with construction activities (e.g., noise, dust, temporary drainage, traffic detours and temporary access, etc.)?

There will be short term noise, dust, and access problems which will result from construction of this proposed project. These temporary impacts are not considered permanent and are therefore below the level of significant (per CEQA). Waste material removed from the construction area will be disposed of in accordance with the Standard Specifications listed in the California Administrative Code.

The project contractor will be required to comply with all local noise level rules, regulations and ordinances as well as the State's Standard Specifications restricting noise levels. These latter specifications will limit the noise levels from the contractor's operations so that between the hours of 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. they shall not exceed noise level standards.

Construction of this project may require use of equipment which has high noise characteristics. Typically, the equipment ranges from concrete mixers to jackhammers which

produce noise levels in the 80 dBA range to over 90 dBA at a distance of 50 feet. To reduce the impact of this noise, construction activities should be confined to the daily period least disturbing to the neighboring community. Other measures to be considered in the use of this equipment include (1) Where there is close proximity to residential frontage, minimize operations from the city street side of the project to create the greatest distance between noise sources and the residents; (2) Arrange the noisiest operations together in the construction program to avoid continuing periods of greater annoyance; (3) Require that equipment be installed and maintained with effective muffler exhaust systems.

Caltrans Standard Specifications pertaining to dust control and dust palliative requirements should effectively mitigate most dust problems during construction. Construction of the proposed project may result in suspended particulate matter being generated. Any impacts will be temporary, local, and limited to construction areas.

All excavated material will be hauled away to an environmentally appropriate disposal site.

The contractor, pursuant to LARWQCB permit requirements, will prepare a Water Pollution Control Plan (WPCP). The WPCP will outline Best Management Practices that will be used to minimize potential impacts and ensure that all state and federal water quality standards are maintained.

The project while under construction will produce a short-term increase in traffic congestion, require some ramp closures, and temporary freeway lane closures. There will be detours to reroute traffic off the freeway. The lane closures will be done at night and at off-peak hours. No consecutive ramps will be closed.

Traffic impacts during construction are temporary in nature. Also, a Traffic Management Plan (TMP) will be required for this project. The TMP will be finalized during the Project, Specifications, and Estimates (PS&E) phase. A cost for the TMP is included in the construction cost estimates. Measures in the TMP will reduce the traffic impacts during construction.

Construction access will be designed to limit vehicular movement to non-residential areas to the maximum extent possible.

Impact on Recreation Land

Question 55. Will the proposal result in the use of any publicly-owned land from a park, recreation area, or wildlife and waterfowl refuge?

Alternatives 3b and Modified Alternative 3b would affect the greenbelt between Culver Boulevard North and Culver Boulevard South, which runs perpendicular to I-405 (Attachment 2 in Chapter 10). Two paths exist within the landscaped greenbelt, an asphaltic bike path, approximately 11-12 feet wide, and an unpaved pedestrian walkway, approximately 5-6 feet wide. The impact onto the paths will be temporary in nature and a Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation has been included in this report identifying measures to minimize harm (See Chapter 10). The Department of the Interior has concurred with the finding that a Programmatic Section 4(f) is appropriate for this project (Appendix H).